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# **Worshipping the King God: A Preliminary Analysis of Chintang Ritual Language in the Invocation of Rajdeu**

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The deity *Rājdeu* (or *Rājdeo* < N. *rājā* 'king' + *deva* 'god') or *Haṇ* (C. *haṇ* 'king, chief') is of great importance among the Chintang (*Chintan*) speakers of Chintang VDC in east Nepal. Before major rituals, especially Nuwagi, this god is worshiped (together with Pomnari) with offerings in front of the house. The ritual is short and simple, yet what makes it particularly interesting is the fact that a distinct ritual language is used, chanted in high speed invocation. A good deal of the lexical material of this language (or register) consists of Nepali words and morphemes, and there is continuous code-switching between ritual and ordinary language. The language as a whole displays the unique features of the *mundum* oral tradition of the Kiranti, which is marked by a combination of ritual nouns and ordinary language verbal forms (Allen 1978, Gaenszle 2002). The present article is a preliminary exploration of ritual language among the Chintang, and Rajdeu's rite seems to be a suitable starting point. In spite of its shortness, it gives an insight into the functioning and structure of ritual speech — and tells us a few things about the enigmatic figure of the "King God".

The Chintang are a group of Kiranti usually regarded as a Rai subtribe. They number about 6.000 speakers but are found only in one village district, Chintang VDC in Dhankuta District, Koshi Zone. Their language, which is still widely spoken, belongs to the eastern group of the Kiranti language. The area where they are settled is known as Khalsa (the ridge west of Basantapur, including Hile and Dhankuta down to the confluence of Arun and Tamur River). This area lies close to the southern plains and it is likely that there has long been contact with the kingdoms and settlers there. Yet, as the case of Rajdeu and his "father" Budhahang shows, there is a strong memory of Kiranti kings who ruled over the ridge.

## 1. Rajdeu and Budhahang in the narrative tradition

The deity *Rājdeu* is also known as *Ṭhakurhaṇ*, both terms referring to his royal qualities (*ṭhakur* 'lord, ruler'). In Rai ritual language he is addressed as *Buṇbuṇca*. In Chintang language the word *buṇbuṇca* refers to the rice which is grown around the house and is used especially for ritual purpose. Thus the name stresses the deity's role as a provider of food and fertility.

We know only a little about the identity of Rajdeu (Hang), but he is closely associated with Budhahang, as he is generally seen as the latter's (adopted) "son" and inheritor. Budhahang is revered as a powerful deity (addressed as *maṇ* 'deity') in the area of Khalsa, especially in Chintang, Akhisalla (*Ākhisalla*), and Belhara (*Belhārā*) VDC. He is seen as a former king of the Khalsa area, who ruled at the time when Prithivi Narayan Shah conquered the Kirat region (1774-75). In this historical period, *Walīṇhaṇ* was the king in *Hatuwā Gaḍhi* in present day Bhojpur district, across the Arun River. The kings of Hatuwa extended their rule over part of Khalsa, but it seems that Budhahang was successful in challenging this dominance.

Strictly speaking Budhahang belongs to Akhisalla VDC (which is adjacent to Chintang VDC), as he is said to have lived there in a *darbār* (palace) whose location is still remembered. People in Akhisalla are reluctant to speak openly about Budhahang as he is still considered a powerful force. There are few and often contradictory accounts about the identity of this king. The parents of Budhahang are said to be unknown,<sup>1</sup> but it is generally agreed that he had three brothers. The names of the four brothers are given as Cinbassa, Rakhanbassa, Rumbassa, Rukumbassa (in order of seniority). Rakhanbassa, the second eldest (*mahilā*), is the one who is also known as Budhahang.

Budhahang, it is said, had several children but the accounts are much at variance concerning the details. Most people in the area agree that he had seven daughters but there is confusion as to their name. According to one informant from Akhisalla the seven daughters are 1. *Sureksī*, 2. *Rakaksī*, 3. *Tigumhaṇma* (= Chintang Devi), 4.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Kājimān Kandañvā (1993: 121), the name of Budhahang's father was Rakhansingh Rai. It is not clear whether this is a historical figure. The author adds that he was a descendant of *Kirāteśvar Mahādev*.

*Jagadeo*, 5. *Siŋciri*, 6. *Luŋciri*, 7. *Piccadaŋma*.<sup>2</sup> In any case, the crucial point on which all agree is that the famous Chintang Devi whose shrine is in Chintang VDC is a daughter of Budhahang. Thus Budhahang is an important ancestral figure for the people of Chintang.

There are also some contradictory stories concerning his son(s). According to local beliefs in the research area Budhahang had only one biological son whose name was *Rucchihaŋ*, but he died an early death. About this incident there is a story. Budhahang, it is said, had a beautiful pond. There were fishes of different colours. One day, Rucchihaŋ killed some of the colourful fishes. When finding out about this Budhahang scolded him. As a consequence the boy was upset, jumped into the pond and died. In this way, it is said, Budhahang lost his only son.<sup>3</sup>

Later on, as it is recounted in other local stories, Budhahang adopted a son – the one who eventually became Rajdeu. The circumstances are not entirely clear but the following is a common version of the story. One day, it is said, Budhahang was coming back from *Kāśī* (Banaras). At that time, he met a young man who was the son of a Brahman. Budhahang asked the Brahman's son to go with him but the latter declined because he wanted to be sure to get his daily meal of rice (which for many Rai was rather the exception than the rule). But Budhahang assured him and said that he could provide a daily meal of rice. Then the Brahman's son agreed and went along with him. Budhahang provided him with a regular meal and eventually adopted him.

Thus in this version Rajdeu is in fact a Brahman, an outsider from the plains who was made the heir of Budhohang! This position is corroborated by the fact that the worship of Rajdeu is always done outside the house, never inside (which is reserved for true ancestors – like Budhohang). Moreover, the only blood offering ever accepted by Rajdeu is that of pigeons, ducks or eggs – never of pigs – which is a sign of his relative purity.

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<sup>2</sup> Kandañvā provides a different series of names: 1. *Pikhāhāñ[mā]*, 2. *Āripīhāñ[mā]*, 3. Chintang Devi (Kandañvā 1993: 121), omitting the names of the four others. According to this source the first daughter stayed in Ankhisalla, the second was given to Limbuwan, and the third married off to Chintang. The land there was given as her dowry.

<sup>3</sup> Again Kandañvā gives a different account: According to him there were two sons who started to quarrel and eventually left for Hatuwa (Kandañvā 1993: 121).

There is some confusion concerning the deity called Pomnari who is worshiped along with Rajdeu (see below). In one version of the story presented above Pomnari was given as the name of Budhahang's adopted son. After arriving in Akhisalla, it is said, the young Brahman was named Pomnari by the villagers. Pomnari derives from *pom* + *nari*. *Pom* is unclear, but *nari* means 'nose' (perhaps an allusion to the form of his nose). Thus Rajdeu would be the same as Pomnari. However, generally people make a clear distinction between the two deities, who are addressed in the ritual separately and by an invocation of equal length. Most Chintang elders described Pomnari as the 'assistant' or 'minister' of Rajdeu.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, one written source from a different locality tells us about a son of Budhahang called *Rachenahari* (which appears to be cognate with *Rucchihaṇ*, see above) who made a Brahman called *Samgrāmsiṃh* his minister (Teñcipā 2003: 50). This might be an indication that there is a historical basis to this story. Possibly a descendant of the legendary Budhahang did in fact employ a Brahman (with the nickname Pomnari) and this descendant and the minister later became deified as Rajdeu and Pomnari, who were worshiped as a couple and thus almost blended into one divinity.

Budhahang is originally worshiped only by those people who belong to the Namcihang/Tunglumi *samet* (proto-clan) group in Chintang and in Akhisalla. This group includes all the original Chintang clans as well as the clans of the *Ciliṇ* subtribe (speakers of a separate language). There are five clans in Ankhisalla: they are *Phancu*, *Phangphu*, *Longawa*, *Chongkha*, *Rajbangsi*. All of these clans are *Ciliṇ* and they are ranked in respect to their relationship to Budhahang. Longawa is considered to be the one closest to Budhahang because their ancestor was his storekeeper and cook. The forefather of the Chongkha was his hunter and therefore is in the second position. Phangphu was Budhahang's sister's son and occupies the third position. Rajbangsi was a shepherd and takes the fourth position. Phancu, the last, was an enemy of Budhahang and till now Phancus are not allowed to enter Chintang Devi's temple compound; also they are not allowed to use boats in the river. Thus Budhahang until today is of crucial importance for understanding the social structure of the *Ciliṇ*.

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<sup>4</sup> Some said that Pomnari is not the son of Budhahang but the son of Rajdeu (in the invocation he is indeed addressed as *haṇcha* 'prince' and *maṇcha* 'son of deity'. This seems to indicate that in popular imagination Budhahang and Rajdeu are sometimes assimilated. In fact, both deities are addressed as "Ṭhakur", thus stressing their lordly position.

There are many more stories about Budhahang which recount his superhuman capabilities. For example, it is said that Budhahang was able to stop the movements of the sun for up to two hours. The story recounts how children who went to the forest with Budhahang had to check his head for lice. But when they looked on his head, they saw not lice but eyes. His head was covered with eyes. As long as the children spent their time with Budhahang it never became dark. Only when they arrived at home, night suddenly fell. That is why people believe that Budhahang was “able to stop the sun”.

The local king Budhahang disappeared when Prithivi Narayan Shah attacked him in the time of Nepal's unification. But because he was so powerful and had knowledge of magic he could not be subdued. According to one source he could revive all the dead Kiranti warriors who were killed by the Shah King.<sup>5</sup> In any case, people in the area still believe that Budhahang is alive. In fact, certain shamans (*naṅsuba*) are possessed by Budhahang, i.e. he enters their body and speaks through them. Thus Budhahang can be seen not only as an ancient king of the Kiranti but also as a living god. Rajdeu, though less spectacular and more hybrid, is likewise a deity with royal qualities.

## 2. Worship of Rajdeu during Nuwagi/Dasain

The Chintang celebrate Nuwagi (*nuwāgi*), the first fruits offering of newly harvested rice, at the time of Dasain. Before the lengthy household rituals proper, which are all held inside the house, some deities have to be satisfied outside the house. The first of these are Rajdeu and Pomnari. This rite takes place in the courtyard of the celebrating house, on the “upper” side (i.e. “uphill”). The following items are required:

### Altar:

- 2 *ṇaksi tupla* (banana leaves), which is where the offerings are placed.
- *acheta* (uncooked rice) from the new harvest,
- *woʔwaphuŋ* or *oʔwalabuŋ*, a particular kind of leaf
- *dubo* (a grass) [only Khikkhaŋ clan]
- *dukci* (a leaf) [only Khikkhaŋ clan]
- water from a *lohoṭā* (small metal water-pot)

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<sup>5</sup> In this version Budhahang was in fact a shaman (*bjiuwa*) who used his calabash to sprinkle water on the dead warriors, thus reviving them and startling the King of Nepal by their invincibility (Teñcipā 2003: 51-52).

The altar consists of the two banana leaves, on each of which is put some rice. One is for Rajdeu proper, the other for Pomnari, his assistant or servant (*sipahi* 'soldier', as one performer put it), also identified as his adopted son. Clearly these are rulers, the masters of the land.

#### Performance:

The priest squats in front of the offerings, facing uphill, holding the water container in this right hand. He starts addressing Buṇbuṇca (i.e. Rajdeu), who is located to his right, pouring water on the offering. As he proceeds he puts the leaves on the other offerings. The same is then done for Pomnari.

At the end, the banana leaves including the offerings are wrapped up and are kept at a place above, either the roof or another location 'outside'.

### 3. Ritual Invocation

The invocation is performed at a high speed: the whole rite, transcribed in 72 clauses of an average 6 words is spoken in 3 minutes and 27 seconds (including a short pause before the performance of the Pomnari part). This style is not typical for the *mundum* language, and it may be that it is an emulation of the Brahmanical way of recitation. In any case, the high speed is possible because a lot of fillers are used, i.e. words and phrases which are almost void of meaning. All of these are in Nepali language.

Consider the first line of address:<sup>6</sup>

rajdeo\_02.01

<i>he</i>	<i>parmeswora</i>	<i>ajadekhi</i>	<i>caĩ</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>bhanedekhi</i>	
he	parameśvara	ājā	-dekhi	caĩ	ke	bhane -dekhi
ADDR	Lord	today	-ABL	SPEC.TOP	what	saying -ABL

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<sup>6</sup> We gloss each morpheme not only for its meaning but also the language it comes from. Coding each morpheme instead of each word is appropriate because we find numerous examples in our corpus where speakers switch languages within words. The interlinear semantic glossing follows the Leipzig Rules ([www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/files/morpheme.html](http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/files/morpheme.html)). In addition C means 'Chintang', N = 'Nepali', C-RL = 'Chintang ritual language'.

N            N            N            -N            N            N            N            -N

Oh Lord, from today, what should I say

हे परमेश्वरा आजदेखि चाहि के भने देखि

This line is entirely in Nepali, but more typically the major terms, in particular nouns, are in Chintang language. In this case the topicalizer *caĩ* and the phrase *ke bhanedekhi* (or variants) are added in a repetitive fashion. This can be seen in the subsequent line.

rajdeo\_02.02

<i>ṇachita</i>	<i>panchutti</i>	<i>maṇbopmi</i>	<i>taṇmaʔmi</i>	<i>sabai</i>	<i>caine</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>alise</i>	
ṇachita	panchutti	maṇbopmi	taṇmaʔmi	sab -ai	caine	ke	a-	lis -e
sacred.rice	flowers	god	big.man	all -EMPH	FILLER	what 2-	be-PST	
C-RL	C-RL	C-RL	C-RL	N -NN	N	C-	C	-C

Rice offering, betel, protecting god, big man, all this is what you became

अछेता पान राखेर छाता जस्तो ढाक्रे देउता ठुलो मान्छे सबै चाहिने के भयौं

Interestingly, here Rajdeu is addressed as a protecting deity and powerful man (for the etymology see below). While the Nepali address in the first line (*parmeswora*) is a standard form, the Chintang expression gives a more specific meaning and marks the deity as belonging to Chintang culture.

In the following we will take a look at the major steps in the invocation of Rajdeu proper (not Pomnari, which, however, is very similar) in order to understand its rhetorical structure.

After the address to the deity with both a Nepali and Chintang expression, the performer states the time of the performance: *eksathi salako caĩ ke bhane*, ‘of 2061, what should I say’. This can be seen as a form of contextualization, indexing the temporal setting of the Nepali calendar. It links the text to the ‘now’ of the performance, stressing that this is not simply a mechanical repetition but a genuine act of referring to the present situation with all its contingencies. The same is achieved by calling out the ritual name of the present season: *nawangī-sewa torṭaiʔma-sewa lasima-sewa* ‘.. first fruits offering, descending time offering, return offering’ (rajdeo\_02.06). This expression refers to the *udhauli* season, i.e. the half-year season which is seen as a ‘descent’ (as all the migratory birds descend to the plains): it generally begins with the end of the



monsoon and last until January, when with the begin of the new agricultural cycle the *ubhauri* season ('ascending time') starts.

The next step in the invocation of Rajdeu is the presentation of offerings. The objects given to the deity are named:

rajdeo\_02.08

tuplachon	berichon	arawa	achetapati
tuplachon	berichon	arawa	achetā - tite pāti
offering.on.banana.leaf	leaf.on.calabash	sacred.rice	sacred.rice - Artemisia vulgaris
C-RL	C-RL	C-RL	N - N

dubo	garera
dubo	garera
holy.grass	having.done
N	N

presenting offerings kept on banana leaf, banana leaf on calabash, sacred rice and mugwort, holy grass,

केराको पात माथि राखेको, चिण्डोमा बाहिलिम लगाएको ऽअछेता अछेतापाति दुबो गरेर

rajdeo\_02.09

o7wa7labuŋ	caine	ke	micibuŋ	garikana	caine	ke
o7wa7labuŋ	caine	ke	micibuŋ	garikana	caine	ke
a_plant	FILLER	what	a_plant	having.done	FILLER	what
C	N	N	C	N	N	N

bhandekhina

bhane	-dekhi	na
saying	-ABL	TOP
N	-N	C

the O7wa7la flower, the Mici flower, what should I say.

ओवलाफुल चाहिने के मुचिफुल गरेर चाहिने के भनेदेखि

The term *tuplachon berichon* is a typical ritual binomial which recurs in many rituals as offerings are generally presented on banana leaves and the calabash with beer is always closed with a piece of the same leaf. Note that the following expression *arawa achetapati* is partly Nepali, but both terms have the same referent, i.e. the sacred rice grains presented on the altar. The “flowers” named in the next line, *o7wa7labuŋ* and *mucibuŋ*, are two kinds of green leaves (not identified so far). It is a

common practice in Kiranti culture to present such “flowers” which are associated with a strong “soul” and female fertility.

The act of presenting and giving is then epitomized with the expression:

rajdeo\_02.10

haniko	caine	ke	sewa	bhakti	pinaʔani				
hani	-ko	caine	ke	sewa	bhakti	pit	-na	-ʔã	-i
2p	-GEN	FILLER	what	greeting	devotion	give	-1>2	-eNPST	-p
C	-C	N	N	C	N	C	-C	-C	-C

I give you all service of devotion

तपाइको चाहिने के सेवा भक्ति तिमीहरुलाई दिन्छु

After the presentation the performer continues with the major part of the address: the request of beneficial gifts in return. These mainly consist in the things which are of major concern for the farmers: fertility of crops, animals and humans. The first line of requests simply enumerates Chintang ritual language nouns which stand for the things asked for: e.g. the term *casumkhiwa* refers to crops in general (*annapāni* in Nepali), *chembiliṅkho* means wealth and property, the term *tayamuluwa* refers to knowledge and wisdom. Similarly, Nepali terms are enounced which express the benefits which are sought: *raja daino panca daino ista daino hasta daino* ‘(let us be) at the right side of the king, right side of five elders, right side of relatives and friends’ (rajdeo\_02.12) and *jiudana bardana sarana picha* ‘the gift of body, blessing and shelter, refuge’ (rajdeo\_02.14). This last expression is followed by the verbal phrase *thuppihili anumdi* ‘may you make make provisions, fulfilment’ (*anumdi*: nonpast subjunctive form of *numa* ‘make’, with second person plural agent and third person patient).

These positive requests are then followed by negative requests, i.e. the appeal for protection from negative forces. Interestingly, these are expressed through Nepali terms:

rajdeo\_02.21-24

*kunai Rahu graha ulka graha phulka graha janma graha*

any Rahu planet, Meteor planet, Phulka planet, Birth planet,

*Ketu graha sani graha sanʔkat graha*

Ketu planet, Sani planet, Sanʔkat planet

*mangal graha tingal graha dhanne graha badrika graha*

Mangal planet, Tingal planet, Dhanne planet, Badrika planet,

*nau santi nau graha Ganga udho*

nine peace nine planets, (go to) the Ganga below!

Thus, bad “planets” – or astrological constellations – are asked to be taken down to the Ganges River, i.e. they are exorcized so to say. The plains below Kiranti country are generally seen as the place where all the rivers flow to and disappear. In Rai mythology this is the place where things originated but also where the dead eventually return to. Eventually the invocation concludes with a kind of summarizing repetition of the contextualization of time and place and the general request for protection of the whole family.

rajdeo\_02.27

sapariwarbe		mikna		anumdi		
saparivār	-be?	mik	- na	a-	numd	-i
having.a.family	-LOC	eye	- TOP	2-	do	-p
N	-C	C	- C	C-	C	-C

may you take care of our family!

सपरिवारमा हाम्रो हेर विचार गर्नुहोस

The final line eventually stresses that “this is the truth, o lord” (*satte khagone o baba*). This can be seen as a validation of the performance (Briggs 1985), i.e. the assertion that what the performer says is true, felicitous, and authentic. At the same time it marks the end of this particular section of the performance. The next line after a short break then starts with the address to Pomnari.

#### 4. Ritual Language

In this section we will take a look at the kind of language involved in this performance, i.e. the special register of speech used in speaking with divine and ancestral forces. A register can be seen as a “linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices. (...) Formally, registers differ in the type of repertoire involved (e.g. lexemes, prosody, sentence collocation), and many registers involve repertoires of more than one kind”

(Agha 2001: 212). Competence to use this register is restricted to knowledgeable elders who usually know some of the rituals but not all. While certain rituals can only be performed by certain categories of ritual experts and shamans, the offering to Rajdeu can be done by many senior householders (*wattoŋ*). In the following we will focus on some of the formal properties of the register used in this context.

Above all the ritual idiom is characterized by the use of special nouns that have been called binomials (Allen 1978). A typical example of such a binomial is the term *maŋbopmi taŋmaʔmi* (see above), which is used as a term of address for the deity. The first “limb” (in Allen’s terminology) can be analyzed as being constituted by the word *maŋ* ‘deity’ + the root of the verb *bopma* ‘to wear, cover’ + the root *-mi* which is common in some Kiranti languages as a marker of persons (Gaenszle 2002: 165) and is a direct descendant of the Proto-Sino-Tibetan root *\*mi* ‘person, man’ (now *maʔmi* in Chintang). Thus the first limb has the meaning of ‘person who is a covering deity’ (i.e. giving protection like an umbrella, as an informant explained), or simply ‘divine protector’. The second limb *taŋmaʔmi* is derived from Chintang *taŋ* ‘head’ + *maʔmi* ‘person, man’, i.e. it means, quite literally, ‘headman’ or more generally ‘big man’ – a person of power. Both limbs of the binomial have an independent meaning, but they usually do not occur alone but only together in this sequence (at least as far as we can tell at this point). This is a case of what Roman Jakobson has termed “canonical parallelism”, in which “certain similarities between successive verbal sequences are compulsory or enjoy high preference” (Jakobson 1966: 399). The basic poetic pattern of parallelism, as Jakobson has demonstrated in his pioneering article, occurs on various levels, and, as further studies have shown (Fox 1988), it is a pervasive feature of many ritual languages around the world. The binomial can be seen as the smallest unit of such parallelism. As such it is an elementary feature of Kiranti ritual language, the tradition of the *mundum*, in general.

Not all binomials are as straightforward as the example above. In order to understand the variety of poetic form we have to take a look at some more examples. In the case of the binomial *tuplachorj berichorj* ‘offerings kept on banana leaf, banana leaf on calabash’ the analysis is more difficult. The term *tupla* is generally used for banana leaves in a ritual context, but the root *chorj* is not entirely clear. In ordinary speech *chorj* is used as a lexical suffix or affixal (dependent) root denoting ‘tip’ or ‘top’, e.g. *khim-*

*chor* ‘on top of the house’.<sup>7</sup> Thus the term *tuplachor* could be translated as ‘(on) top of the banana leaf’, metonymically referring to the thing placed there. However, the second limb *berichor*, though the meaning was clearly explained by the performer, could not be derived from a constituent lexeme *beri*. In this case there is no independent meaning, or, possibly there once was one and it got lost. (One could best compare it to *cran* in *cranberry* and the like.)

As these two examples already show, the morphology of ritual binomials can take various forms – and there are many more. In order to facilitate a classification of such terms N.J. Allen (1978) has come up with a helpful system. He distinguishes morphological elements according to their resemblance with “free-standing words” or verbal roots from the ordinary language (symbolized by capital letters: A, B, C), their status as affixes (s,t), or their being non-identifiable (a,b,c). In addition he underlines those symbols which represent the global meaning of the expression (or an approximation of it), and separates the two limbs by a full stop. Thus our first example above *manbopmi tanma?mi* would be represented as ABs.CD. However, the distinction between word and affix is problematic, as in most cases what one encounters (especially in final position of each limb) are simply roots, often ancient Proto-Sino-Tibetan roots, such as the \**mi* ‘person, man’ in our example (Benedict 1972, Matisoff 2003). Thus an alternative representation would be ABC.DeC. Note that this representation more adequately reflects the parallelism of the limbs, ending in the same element. The second example *tuplachor berichor* accordingly would be written as AB.cB. It also becomes clear that the global meaning and thus the “semantic weight” can be on either limb and both at its beginning or its end. In general terms, then, the limbs of Chintang binomials (as far as we can say at this point) consist of two or three roots (R1-R2-[R3]), and the root in the final position is identical in both limbs.

Now, what is interesting in this invocation is the high number of Nepali terms which also appear as binomials. Take the example of *jiudana bardana* ‘the gift of body, blessing’ referred to above. This binomial is constructed in a similar fashion. Whereas *bardana* is a standard Nepali expression (*bardān*, ‘gift, blessing’ < Skt. *varadāna*), the term *jiudān* (‘gift of body’) is more unique, but the combination of both appears to be a local construction which is achieved by following the formation principles of Kiranti

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<sup>7</sup> In Belhare the root *-chor* includes the meaning ‘tip’ or ‘point’, and it may be that originally *tuplachor* referred to the tip of a banana leaf.

binomials. Another example is the subsequent expression *sarana pichana*, which is derived from Nepali *śaraṇ* ‘shelter, protection’ and *pichā* ‘shelter, refuge’. The final *-na* in the second limb is apparently an addition purely for reasons to meet the requirements for parallelism. Thereby, the element *-na* serves as a pseudo-root, as a substitute for one of the real roots (*choṇ*, *m*) mentioned above. Note that the syllable *na* is used elsewhere in Chintang as an epenthetic, meaningless element that is inserted in order to meet prosodic demands: Bickel et al. (2005) observe a general constraint for verbal compounds that the first element is disyllabic; if this element is not disyllabic on its own and there is no inflectional suffix that could make it disyllabic, epenthetic *-na* is inserted.

A further observation which can be made when looking at this short text is that binomials are not the only possible form: there are also trinomials and – in fact – multinomials. Consider the form *nawaṅgi-sewa toṇtai?ma-sewa lasima-sewa* ‘first fruits offering, descending time offering, return offering’. This expression consists of three limbs, each of which is a compound word with *sewa* (N. ‘service, worship, offering’) as the semantic head and three different attributive specifications: in the first case it is *nawaṅgi* (N. *nuwāgi*, ‘first fruits’), in the second an infinitive phrase *toṇ* (‘time’) *tai?ma* (*taṭ* ‘to bring’), and in the third again an infinitive *lasima* (< *las-* ‘to return’).<sup>8</sup> One might speculate that the expression was originally a binomial and later became extended by the first all-Nepali limb. In fact this limb *nawaṅgi-sewa* also occurs in combination with *udhauḷi-sewa*, thus again forming a binomial. In any case, the example indicates that the limbs of binomials can be recombined in a rather deliberate fashion.

Yet, three limbs is not the limit: as the line quoted earlier showed there can be even more complex forms: the nine *grahas* enumerated in *rajdeo\_02.21-24* come in no less than 12 limbs. Though this seems rather exceptional and may be due to external influence, such enumerations can also occur with Chintang ritual nouns. This however tends to take the form of an enumeration of binomials, e.g. *oktoṇwa seleiwa kharauiwa ruṇchauiwa* ‘cock and local alcoholic drinks’ (*rajdeo\_02.40*). The first limb of the first binomial can be derived from *okma* ‘to crow’ (the second is unclear), the first limb of the second binomial, *kharauiwa*, is related to *arkha* ‘local liquor’, the second limb means beer (called *thi* in ordinary language).

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<sup>8</sup> From the point of view of Chintang grammar it is unusual for such a compound to involve the infinitive desinence *-ma*, yet prosodically the limb is clearly one word (stressed on the first syllable). This is the likely result of lexicalization and ritualization of the expressions.

Let us turn to verbal expressions used in ritual language. It must be stressed that verbal forms are not as prominent as the nouns, and where they occur they tend to be stereotypic. Generally these are not different from forms used in ordinary speech. Two recurrent phrases are, e.g. *alise* ('you are'), and *pinaʔani* 'I give you', forms which are no different from ordinary grammatical expressions. The deity is clearly addressed in the second person (singular or plural), as one would address ordinary persons (honorific forms do not exist in Chintang). Interestingly, however, instead of direct imperatives the invocation exclusively relies on subjunctive forms (e.g. *thuppihili anumdi* 'may you make provisions' or *mikna anumdi* 'may you take care' in rajdeo\_02.14 and rajdeo\_02.27 above), which are less direct and thus can be seen as more polite. (Subjunctives are formed by affixing regular person agreement markers, here *a-* '2' and *-i* 'p', to stems without any tense or mood markers; imperatives involve a special suffix *-a*). This contrasts with ordinary language, where second person subjunctives cannot be used in imperative function, i.e. for expressing that the addressee should do something. In ordinary language, second person subjunctives denote a possible, unrealized event; the most prominent use is to invoke a possible event that the addressee should avoid, if anything (e.g. *a-tham* [2-fall] 'you may fall', meaning 'may you not fall!'). Thus the pragmatic meaning of second person subjunctives in ordinary language is most often just the opposite of their meaning in ritual language.

On the syntactic level parallel constructions are particularly evident, as the fillers are interspersed throughout the text according to the prosodic needs of the rhythmic incantation. Just to give one example:

rajdeo\_02.26

Buŋbuŋca	baphaĩʔma	caine	ke
Buŋbuŋca	baphaĩma	caine	ke
Royal.deity	DEM	FILLER	what
C	C	N	N

lisa	khagone	baphaĩʔma	caine	ke	
lis	-a	kha- go -ne	baphaĩma	caine	ke
be	-PST	PTCL-PTCL-PTCL	DEM	FILLER	what
C	-C	C- C -C	C-RL	N	N

Buŋbuŋca was here all over this place, here on this place,

बुडबुडचा यसैमा चाहिने के भएको थियो है यस्मा चाहिने के

Most verbs in the text are in Chintang, but there are also some cases of Nepali verbs: *dubo garera* 'offering dubo grass', *miciburŋ garikana* 'having offered the Mici flower', or a rare verbal phrase: *citako phalis* 'you (may) grow what we want'. Generally it seems that in the domain of verbs the Chintang language is more dominant than in the domain of nouns. This, we should add, is also true of ordinary Chintang.

To conclude this section, we can say that parallelism is a major characteristic of Chintang ritual language: above all it is prominent in the form of binomials, or, in fact, multinomials. It can further be observed that the Nepali language is very much part of the ritual register. There is a constant code-switching which occurs even as code mixing within words. Yet the style of the register seems to be clearly of Kiranti character. One is reminded of other ritual languages in Nepal which have chosen to use Nepali as a distinct code, even though it is not used so much in ordinary speech (see the case of the Kham Magar, de Sales 1991). The text examined here, it should be noted, is a particularly strong case of such code-switching, not all performers do this to such a degree. Yet it is a trait one finds in most if not all genres of Chintang ritual speech.

## 5. Conclusions

As linguistic anthropologists have claimed, forms of address contribute to the construction of personhood in verbal interaction, so a ritual invocation as that of Rajdeu tells us something about how the deity is viewed by the Chintang speakers. Considering the language and rhetoric used in the invocation of Rajdeu what kind of deity do we encounter? What emerges above all is that the deity is a powerful being, having attributes of a political leader (a king, a headman) but also having the characteristics of a divine being on whose goodwill life of the people depends. Rajdeu is asked to provide protection, above all from inauspicious influence and heavenly obstructions, and he is asked for wealth, good crops, and fertility, as is commonly the case with ancestral forces among the Kiranti. In order to obtain these benefits the householder has show his submission, much like a petitioner in ordinary social life, present offerings to the superior being, and speak to him in the ritual idiom.



If we look at the linguistic features of the ritual language, the pervasive parallelism inherent in the distinct lexical repertoire as well as the syntactic structures, and the special use of second person subjunctives underline the ceremonial, or formal character of this speech form. This is a widespread feature of ritual languages and marks them as particularly authoritative, sacred and polite. It is a form of speaking which is regarded as “archaic”, linked with the time of the ancestors (Kuipers 1990).

In this regard, it is striking that we find such a high portion of Nepali words. Many of them are simply fillers and do not have much meaning, but there are also crucial religious concepts which have been adopted from a different cultural context. Nevertheless, one can say that the style of the language, and the parallel structure of binomials in particular, has a clear Kiranti character and shares many features with other *mundum* traditions. That many of the Nepali words are incorporated into this tradition can be seen as a form of “Kirantization”, i.e. they are made to look like *mundum* terms.

Thus one can say that Rajdeu is a hybrid being: he is a Kiranti king, the adopted son and heir of the legendary invanquishable Budhahang but also of Brahmanic descent. He is worshiped regularly, though only “outside” domestic space, along with his assistant or minister or descendant Pomnari, an equally ambiguous figure, who is addressed in very similar fashion. The old Kiranti kings, like Budhahang and his successor Rajdeu – the King God, may have succumbed to the military and political power of the Shah rulers. But their spirit lives on to the present as ambivalent superhuman beings who have incorporated and thus appropriated the religious power of their former enemy.

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